

THE FRAGILE FUTURE OF HAITI

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, next week I will be leading a bipartisan delegation to the nation of Haiti. I have been there many times in the last five years, and never before have I seen obstacles of nation-building so substantial and the determination of a people so focused.

In December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president in the first democratic elections Haiti ever held. He overwhelmingly defeated all the other candidates, including the U.S.-backed candidate. Less than one year later, in September 1991, he was overthrown by a military coup d'etat. The international community responded with a massive embargo to try to squeeze power from the grip of the junta.

During the years of the military regime, Haiti suffered under horrible human rights conditions. The terror that people thought they had put behind them in 1986 and 1987 when the Duvalier dictatorship ended and a new constitution was formed returned with a new vengeance. Supporters of democracy were harassed by attachés and the FAHD, as the Haitian army was called. Worst of all, as many as 5000 people were killed by a paramilitary organization called FRAPH, led by a U.S. intelligence contact named Emmanuel "Toto" Constant.

By 1994, President Clinton decided that this was too much and it was time to act. On September 19, U.S. troops led a multi-national force in Operation Uphold Democracy that restored Haiti's legitimately elected government to power.

It soon became obvious, though, that Haiti's challenges had just begun.

For one, Haiti had to figure out what to do with a military that was 7,000 soldiers strong. It managed to abolish that corrupt institution and build an interim public safety force with the help of the international community. Since then Haiti has been working with the United States and the international community to build a civilian police force that respects the rule of law and human rights while gaining the confidence of the population. Now the police force is 6,500 officers strong, and the U.S. is largely responsible for training 5,200 of them.

Haiti also had to revitalize an economy that had been ravaged by a massive drug trade, a constant flow of contraband, and the flight of private investment in the face of the embargo. Today real GDP growth is hovering around 3 to 5 percent, inflation is down to a remarkable 7 percent, and exports are up 44 percent. Many economic reforms have taken place, and the government is ebbing toward dialogue with those popular organizations, unions, and people who have an interest in seeing that they occur in the least harmful way, and with the greatest democratic input. Economic reforms need to happen, but they will only be successful with the full consent and participation of those most profoundly affected by them.

Haiti also discovered that political interests that had united around Aristide before and during the coup began fragmenting, creating a diversity of views but also a new kind of politi-

cal confusion. This confusion has culminated in a political paralysis that has left Haiti without a prime minister for over a year now.

I am going to Haiti with my good colleagues, Mr. DELAHUNT from Massachusetts and Mr. CHRISTENSEN from Nebraska in the hopes that we can gain some insight into the crisis, offer our thoughts, and describe to them what I think is happening here in Washington with regard to Haiti. Mr. Speaker, I think Haiti has slipped from the radar screen of many in Congress, which I think is very problematic. I also think it is clear that those in Congress who do follow Haiti closely are terribly frustrated with this enduring political crisis that has dragged on for so long.

This delegation is going to Haiti because we believe a political solution is necessary and possible. I hope the American people and the Congress are prepared to give this fragile democracy the attention it deserves. We need to do everything we can to make sure this nation succeeds and that the hard fought gains of the democratic movements of the 1980's are not turned back. Let's keep hope alive in Haiti.

TRIBUTE TO BILL McDONALD

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize my friend Bill McDonald, a constituent from Douglas, Arizona, who earlier this month was awarded a prestigious "genius grant" by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. I can't think of anyone more deserving of this recognition, for I have seen the fruits of Bill's particular vision and genius first hand.

Bill and I have a few things in common: We both grew up on family ranches in southeastern Arizona, and we both have an abiding faith in the bedrock values of hard work, individual liberty, and personal responsibility. We also share a love for the land which, in Bill's case, has sustained his family for five generations.

To appreciate the true significance of the accomplishment for which Bill has been recognized, one must first understand that there is a real Range War raging through the American West today. It is a classic conflict that pits certain environmentalists against the cattle ranching industry, and federal land managers have been caught in the crossfire.

Bill decided to reject the old paradigm and try something new. With true pioneering spirit, he established the Malpai Borderlands Group, a group of neighboring ranchers whose properties, along with adjacent public lands, comprise about one million acres of contiguous territory in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

Under Bill's leadership, and in cooperation with various federal land management agencies, conservationists and scientists, the Malpai Borderlands Group ranchers have developed an innovative, voluntary land management strategy. They also have funded programs to identify and protect endangered species on their land.

Through a unique, cooperative grass banking program, participating ranchers are permitted to graze their cattle on one another's

property. This eliminates problems, such as erosion and habitat destruction, that can result from overgrazing.

Group members also have pooled resources to support experimental land management programs, including the replanting of native grasses. And they have agreed to establish permanent conservation easements to prevent the open range from being subdivided for residential development.

Bill and his neighbors have demonstrated that cattle ranching can be both economically rewarding and ecologically responsible. And the Malpai Borderlands Group that he founded is proof positive that ranchers, acting with enlightened self interest, can be the best stewards of the land they love.

HONORING OFFICER THOMAS A. PORTER

HON. JOSEPH P. KENNEDY II

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a valiant peace officer who time and time again over his long career in law enforcement demonstrated bravery and self-sacrifice.

Officer Thomas A. Porter, a native of the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts, showed from an early age his devotion to law enforcement—working as a teenage Junior Deputy to educate his school peers about the dangers of drug abuse. While working his way through the University of Alabama, Officer Porter received high honors in the fields of criminal justice, social work, and public relations, and served as an intern to a state supreme court judge and future U.S. Senator.

But it was in his chosen field of law enforcement that Officer Porter most distinguished himself.

His first assignment came with the Hyannisport Police Department on Cape Cod, where he served and protected every resident of the community, including the members of my family. During his tenure on the Hyannisport force, Officer Porter, in complete disregard for his own safety, broke down the door of a burning house and rescued an 82-year-old man.

Officer Porter left Cape Cod for Wintergreen, Virginia, Police Department, where he continued to compile an outstanding record, uncovering a notorious burglar ring and working on special assignment with the Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Officer Porter's law-enforcement career came to a tragic and premature close in 1992. While confronting a suspect in a breaking-and-entering investigation, he was run over by the suspect's vehicle and suffered spinal cord injuries and several broken bones. He was paralyzed for almost two years but through rehabilitation has been able to regain partial mobility. Throughout the period of his convalescence, Officer Porter has served as an inspiration to fellow disabled officers.

In recognition of his selfless duty and willingness—at any moment of danger—to give his last full measure of devotion, the National Trust of Chiefs of Police Association voted earlier this year to award Officer Porter the Legion of Honor Medal as well as the Silver Star for Bravery.